

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SS-15

NSC-05 IO-13 /062 W

-----040048Z 012193 /66

R 030925Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9766

INFO AMCONGEN HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 4763

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, VN

SUBJ: THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS APPARATUS AND PLAYERS IN HANOI: THE
VICE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REF: BANGKOK A-48

SUMMARY: SUPPLEMENTING INFO TRANSMITTED SEPTEL ON THE
PROCESS OF FOREIGN POLICY MAKING AND HANDLING OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
WITHIN THE SRV, FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVEN
VICE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, COMPILED CHIEFLY ON THE
BASIS OF COMMENTS OF DIPLOMATS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF INTER-
NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CURRENTLY OR PREVIOUSLY ASSIGNED TO
HANOI. BASIC BIO INFO ON THESE AND OTHER SENIOR SRV OFFICIALS
IS AVAILABLE IN WASH. RATHER THAN RPTING MOST KNOWN
INFO ABOUT THE SEVEN, THE EMBASSY HAS TRIED TO INCLUDE
MORE RECENT INFORMATION WHICH MAY NOT BE GENERALLY AVAILABLE,
AS WELL AS THE IMPRESSIONS OUR SOURCES HAVE FORMED OF THESE MEN
END SUMMARY.

1. PHAN HIEN. UNIVERSALLY DESCRIBED AS VERY SMOOTH,
HIEN, A CAREER MFA TYPE, HAS BEEN IN HIS PRESENT POSITION
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SINCE THE PARIS PEACE TALKS ENDED IN 1973. AS VICE MINISTER,
HE HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA, AUSTRALIA,
NEW ZEALAND AND--THOUGHT TO BE BECAUSE OF HIS CONTACT WITH
SECRETARY KISSINGER IN PARIS--NORTH AMERICA. SEVERAL MONTHS
AGO HIEN ALSO TOOK OVER SOUTH ASIA FROM NGUYEN CO THACH,
AND IT HAS BEEN UNCLEAR IN HANOI WHETHER--AND TO WHOM--HE
LOST NORTH AMERICA IN THE PROCESS. UNDOUBTEDLY, IT WILL

ONLY BE DURING THE VISIT OF THE U.S. DELEGATION TO HANOI LATER THIS MONTH THAT WE WILL LEARN THE ANSWER. ALTHOUGH HIEN ESTABLISHED GOOD PARTY CREDENTIALS IN HIS YOUTH, HE IS NOT THOUGHT TO HAVE MUCH OF A POLITICAL BASE AT PRESENT. ALONG WITH THACH, HIEN (NOW 58) IS CONSIDERED TO BE AMONG THOSE A HALF-GENERATION REMOVED FROM THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP WHO WILL CARRY ON WHEN THE LATTER PASSES FROM THE SCENE.

2. BOTH HIEN AND THACH ARE SAID TO BE CLOSE TO PHAM VAN DONG AND TO SHARE HIS MODERATE STANCE. AS DONG ALSO DID RECENTLY (REPAIR), HIEN HAS BEEN KNOWN TO MAKE AN EFFORT AT KEEPING THE SOVIETS AT ARM'S DISTANCE. A REPRESENTATIVE OF AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION REPORTED THAT, AT A PARTY WHICH UN OFFICIALS HOSTED IN HANOI LAST SUMMER, THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR SAW HIEN FROM ACROSS THE ROOM AND BEGAN STRIDING OVER TO SEE HIM. HIEN ABRUPTLY TURNED HIS BACK TO THE APPROACHING ENVOY, TOOK OUR SOURCE BY THE ARM, AND DREW HIM ASIDE FOR A BRIEF CONVERSATION, AFTERWARDS DID HIEN TURN AND GREETED THE SOVIET. OUR SOURCE CONCLUDED THAT HIEN WAS DELIBERATELY TRYING TO "KEEP THE SOVIETS IN THEIR PLACE".

3. HIEN IS REPORTEDLY CLOSE TO XUAN THUY, GOING BACK AT LEAST TO THEIR DAYS TOGETHER AT THE PARIS TALKS. ONE WESTERN DIPLOMAT BASED IN HANOI NOTED A MONTH AGO, THAT, AMONG ALL THE VICE FOREIGN MINISTERS, XUAN THUY'S FOREIGN RELATIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WHICH OFTEN CALLS ON CIVIL SERVANTS FOR ASSISTANCE, HAS CALLED ESPECIALLY ON HIEN'S SERVICES. THE SOPHISTICATED HIEN IS SAID TO BE A CONFIDENTIAL

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VERY GOOD EXECUTOR OF POLICY. ONE AMBASSADOR OF A NON-ALIGNED COUNTRY SAID IN JAN, 1977, THAT HE LIKED HIEN IN PARTICULAR BECAUSE "YOU CAN SPEAK TO HIM FRANKLY, AND HE WILL CONSIDER ALL SIDES OF A QUESTION".

4. NGUYEN CO THACH. A VICE MINISTER SINCE 1960, THACH (57) IS FREQUENTLY CONTRASTED WITH HIEN BY MANY WESTERN OBSERVERS. AS ONE ENVOY NOTED IN NOV, 1976, THE SRV "SEEMS TO PLAY THE TWO MEN WELL. IF AUTHORITIES WANT SOMEONE WHO SMILES WELL AND SAYS THE RIGHT THING, THEY BRING ON HIEN. IF THE SITUATION CALLS FOR SOMEONE WHO IS FRANK SPEAKING AND DOWN TO EARTH, THACH IS USED."

5. THACH IS RESPONSIBLE AT MFA FOR RELATIONS WITH WESTERN EUROPE AND JAPAN AND WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. OBSERVERS ARE UNANIMOUS IN DESCRIBING HIM AS IMPRESSIVE, VERY SHARP, SOLID, AND--CONTRARY TO A FREQUENT PROBLEM IN THE VIETNAMESE MFA--DECISIVE. HE DEMONSTRATED HIS AUTHORITY TWO YEARS AGO WHEN UNHCR WAS ATTEMPTING TO

ESTABLISH ITS HANOI OFFICE. AFTER REVIEWING ALL THE PLANS, THE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE ASKED WHETHER THACH WOULD HAVE TO SHOW THEM TO MINISTER TRINY BEFORE IMPLEMENTING ACTION COULD BE TAKEN. THACH REPLIED NEGATIVELY AND TOOK THE NECESSARY ACTION HIMSELF.

6. ONE SOURCE NOTED LAST MONTH THAT NO ONE IN HANOI WAS SURPRISED WHEN THACH WAS APPOINTED A MEMBER OF THE CPV CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN DEC. THAT PERSON SAID HE CONSIDERED THACH MORE INTELLIGENT THAN HIEN. THERE IS SPECULATION OF LATE THAT THACH COULD REPLACE TRINH (67), SHOULD THE LATTER DECIDE TO STEP DOWN. ONE EX-ENVOY WONDERED IF THACH HAD ENOUGH OF A PARTY BASE TO DO SO (HE HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN PARTY ACTIVITY IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE DAYS) ALTHOUGH, PRESUMABLY, HIS APPOINTMENT TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE BEGINS TO TAKE CARE OF THAT REQUIREMENT. THACH'S CONCENTRATION FOR THE FIRST TIME PRIMARILY ON ECONOMIC
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MATTERS DURING HIS EUROPEAN TOUR IN JAN, 1977, MAY REPRESENT AN EFFORT AT BROADENING HIM. HOWEVER, THIS CONCENTRATION ON ECONOMIC MATTERS MAY SIMPLY HAVE BEEN REFLECTING THE COUNTRY'S CURRENT EMPHASIS ON RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT.

7. AN ASPECT OF THACH'S PERSONALITY WAS EXHIBITED DURING WHITEHOUSE

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NSC-05 IO-13 /062 W
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R 030925Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9767
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 4763

A RECENT VISIT OF A UNDP DELEGATION LOOKING INTO THE MODALITIES OF OPENING A HANOI OFFICE. NAIVELY (IN VIEW OF THE SEVERE SHORTAGE OF HOUSING), A MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION TOLD THACH THAT HIS ORGANIZATION WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A VILLA FOR ITS OFFICES. TONGUE IN CHEEK, THACH REPLIED, "FINE, I WILL LET YOU KNOW WHEN WE HAVE ONE AVAILABLE." THE DELEGATION DEPARTED HAPPILY, BELIEVING THAT IT WOULD SOON RECEIVE SUCH A MESSAGE, AND CYNICAL DIPLOMATS IN HANOI ARE STILL CHUCKLING THAT THACH "PUT ONE OVER ON THEM".

8. HOANG VAN LOI. NAMED TO HIS PRESENT POSITION IN 1963, LOI IS OF THE OLDER GENERATION OF LEADERS (66). ALTHOUGH NOT A MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, HE HAS VERY SOLID REVOLUTIONARY CREDENTIALS, THANKS TO WHICH HE IS SAID TO BE VERY WELL CONNECTED. BASED ON HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES, HE SEEMS TO CONCENTRATE ON RELATIONS WITH THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE, ALTHOUGH HE DID TRAVEL AROUND AFRICA LAST SUMMER.

9. MOST NON-COMMUNIST DIPLOMATS AND OTHERS LIVING IN HANOI DO NOT KNOW LOI. ONE WHO DID WHEN HE WAS THERE SEVERAL YEARS AGO CLAIMED TO HAVE SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME IN INTERESTING
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CONVERSATION WITH HIM. HE SAID THAT LOI HAS A "FINELY ATTUNED" PERSONALITY AND IS A PERSON WITH WHOM ONE CAN RELATE. IDEOLOGICALLY, LOI IS A "PURIST", FEELING FAR MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THE USSR THAN THE PRC.

10. HOANG VAN TIEN. SAID TO BE IN HIS POSITION SINCE 1960, TIEN (61) IS VERY LITTLE KNOWN. JUDGING FROM RECENT PUBLIC APPEARANCES, HIS DUTIES CUT ACROSS THE EUROPEAN AND ASIAN COMMUNIST WORLDS. HE ALSO VISITED AFRICA IN MID-1976. ONE ENVOY WHO TRIED TO STRIKE UP A RELATIONSHIP OBSERVED THAT TIEN IS NOT ESPECIALLY OPEN AND, THUS, NOT VERY EASY TO GET TO KNOW.

11. HOANG LUONG. IN HIS CURRENT POSITION ONLY SINCE 1973 (TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE), LUONG SEEMS TO THOSE OBSERVERS FAMILIAR WITH HIM TO BE IN A "CATCH-ALL" POSITION. ONE ASIAN DIPLOMAT DESCRIBED HIM AS A NICE MAN WITH WHOM TO TALK OR TO SEND ON TRIPS (LATIN AMERICA AND CANDA LAST YEAR) TO SHOW THE FLAG, BUT HE SIMPLY DOES NOT SEEM TO FIT INTO THE POWER STRUCTURE. A EUROPEAN DIPLOMAT SAID HE FINDS HIM NEITHER INSPIRING NOR IMPRESSIVE, ALTHOUGH HE IS A FRIENDLY SORT OF MAN. ONE ENVOY SAID HE BELIEVED LUONG

IS RESPONSIBLE FOR LATIN AMERICA, ALTHOUGH HE IS IDENTIFIED IN HIS RECENT PUBLIC APPEARANCES WITH SUCH DISPARATE ELEMENTS AS THE PLO AND DELEGATIONS FROM YEMEN, HUNGARY, AND FINLAND. THERE IS SOME FEELING THAT HE SUPERVISES ADMINISTRATION AT THE MINISTRY, AS WELL.

12. HOANG BICH SON. ALTHOUGH NAMED AS ONE OF THE NEW VICE MINISTERS IN A VIETNAMESE MFA NOTE OF DECEMBER 30, 1976, SON HAS BEEN APPEARING IN THAT CAPACITY SINCE WELL BEFORE THAT TIME, PRIMARILY MEETING SOVIETS AND CUBANS. HE IS UNKNOWN PERSONALLY TO ANY OF OUR HANOI CONTACTS.

13. NGUYEN VAN TIEN. APPROXIMATELY 54 YEARS OF AGE, TIEN IS ONE OF THE FAVORITES OF THE HANOI DIPLOMATIC CORPS.
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HE IS DESCRIBED AS PERSONABLE, WITTY, REASONABLE, HONEST, OPEN, "LIKES THE GOOD LIFE", AND "A GREAT GUY". AFTER BEING AN IMPORTANT PRG FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL FOR YEARS, INCLUDING SERVING AS DEPUTY TO MADAME BINH IN PARIS, TIE WAS THE PRG SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE IN HANOI UNTIL REUNIFICATION LAST JULY. HE APPARENTLY CHAFED IN THE MEANINGLESS POSITION, TELLING ONE OF OUR SOURCES WHEN HIS JOB WAS ABOLISHED, "THANK GOD, NOW I CAN FINALLY LEAVE IT." TIEN TRAVELLED TO EAST GERMANY FOR A MEDICAL CHECK-UP AND WAS SEEMINGLY PRONOUNCED FIT, PROBABLY THEN BEGINNING TO WORK AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ("HE GOT HIS REWARD"), ALTHOUGH HIS NAME WAS COMMUNICATED OFFICIALLY TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ONLY ON DECEMBER 30. TIEN WAS NAMED SECGEN OF THE UNIFIED VIET-NAM FATHERLAND FRONT IN SAIGON ON FEBRUARY 4, 1977, WHICH WE DOUBT THAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE PART OF HIS "REWARD".

14. ONE ENVOY NOTED THAT THE REASON HE LIKES TIEN IS THAT HE IS DIFFERENT FROM MANY OTHER OFFICIALS. HE SAID TIEN DOES NOT BECOME EXCITED WHEN THE SUBJECT OF THE AMERICAN BOMBING OF VIET-NAM ARISES, UNLIKE OTHERS "WHOM YOU JUST HAVE TO TURN OFF". HOWEVER HIS ACTIONS TOWARD US MAY HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED IN PARIS, TIEN IS NOT A FOE OF THE US ACCORDING TO ANOTHER SOURCE.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BANGKO04763
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BANGKOK A-48
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3224122
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS APPARATUS AND PLAYERS IN HANOI: THE VICE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, VN, (NGUYEN CO THACH), (PHAN HIEN), (HOANG VAN LOI), (HOANG VAN TIEN), (HOANG LUONG), (HOANG BICH SON)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4ab6d7be-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009